



Student Complaints and Appeals Policy

Purpose

This policy provides details processes as to how Victorian School of Commerce (VSC) deals with complaints, grievances and appeals made by prospective and current students. It outlines the resolution of complaints or appeals in compliance with the relevant legislative requirements and without reprisal to the complainant or appellant.

Scope

This policy applies to VSC's all existing and prospective students, staff, agents or other related parties.

Definitions

Appeal – An application which is made by a student to have a decision reviewed that may affect the student's study, progression or wellbeing.

Complainant – The student who has lodged a complaint

Mediator – A staff member of skilled person in the academic environment who is able to be impartial and objective with both the complainant and respondent.

Representative – A staff member, or a union representative who is able to provide support, and not a practicing barrister or solicitor

Respondent(s) – one or more member who is the alleged to be the cause of the student's complaint

Policy

All students at VSC have the right to make complaints and appeals in written form and to receive constructive response within a reasonable timeframe. Relevant complaints made by students are taken seriously by VSC. Appropriate actions are taken as soon as is necessary. It is essential for VSC that students receive the support needed and obtain the best possible outcomes. It is important to VSC that students do not fear a negative reprisal from their lodgement of a complaint. No student will be disadvantaged for making a complaint or appeal and the student's enrolment at VSC will remain active throughout these processes.

VSC is committed to resolve students' complaints and appeals about academic and non-academic aspects of their experience as well as to provide them effective and efficient internal complaints resolution processes that are timely, impartial and at no cost to the students. Academic and non-academic complaints are dealt with separately and both this Policy and the following Procedures will deal with them separately.

VSC will provide a complaints and appeals process for students that is transparent, fair and equitable. The resolution of complaints or appeals will be carried out in compliance with the requirements of the accreditation authorities including:



- *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*
- *The Australian Education Act 2013*
- *The Australian Education Regulation 2013*
- *Department of Education Complete Privacy Policy 2014*

Each student has 20 business days to notify VSC from the first occurrence of a relevant matter. A complaint may be lodged outside of the 20 business day period on the basis of exceptional circumstances which includes but is not limited to circumstances such as death, family grievance, serious medical injury or condition or other significant circumstances beyond the student's control. Each case will be determined on an individual case-by-case basis. No student shall be prejudiced in the instance that the complaint is lodged outside of the regular timeframe.

The complaint or appeal has to be in writing. Formal complaints and appeals will be resolved without charge or cost to the student. Where a student has attempted to resolve a complaint informally, the time for lodging the formal complaint shall commence after any outcome of that informal process and no student shall be disadvantaged by having attempted informal resolution of the complaint.

VSC will commence assessment of the complaint or appeal within 10 working days of it being made and will give an outcome within 5 business days thereafter.

If the student is not successful in the internal complaints handling and appeals process, VSC will advise the student within 10 working days of concluding the internal review of the student's right to access an external complaints handling and appeals process at **no cost to student**.

The following principles apply to the handling of student complaints at VSC:

- Commitment to an early and informal resolution of the complaint where this is possible.
- Communication maintained with the complainant or appellant throughout the resolution process.
- An impartial and fair process in place for the student to lodge a formal complaint if the matter cannot be resolved informally with accurate information for the student to be able to lodge the complaint.
- Provision of support for the student that is impartial and objective throughout the resolution process.
- Access to independent professional advice where needed at student's own cost.
- Ensuring access to an independent Student Representative to support the student at any stage of the resolution process.
- Prompt and adequate timeframes for resolving the complaint.
- Communicating the resolution decision to the student in writing including the reasons for the decision and advising further avenues for appeal available to them.
- Provision for the student to make an appeal if required.



- Providing clear details of options for students if appeal is not satisfied with a resolution.
- Ensuring students are aware of both informal and formal processes for making a complaint.

Information regarding complaints and appeals policies and procedures will be available on the VSC's website, student handbooks, student portal, Learning Management System (LMS) and unit outlines. Confidentiality and privacy of all parties will be maintained in the handling of all complaints. VSC will ensure that the designated staff in charge of the investigations have no conflicts of interests with the matter being investigated.

The *Students Complaints and Appeals Procedure* will outline the processes and steps in detail.

Academic Complaints

Students' academic complaints and appeals relate to the delivery of a program which may include but not be limited to the following:

- Enrolment in courses or units
- Progression
- Outcomes of Assessments
- Final grade appeal
- Outcome of special consideration applications
- Prior learning recognition
- Graduation eligibility
- Decisions that may be related to academic misconduct or integrity (e.g., plagiarism)

Allegations that are related to student academic misconduct will be dealt with under the *Academic Integrity Policy*. If the student wishes to raise a complaint which arises from a breach of the *Academic Integrity Policy* the following process will be in place:

- Informal Complaint
- Formal Complaint
- Investigation of Formal Complaint
- Initial Outcome of Formal Complaint
- Internal Appeal Official Outcome
- Outcome of Internal Appeal
- External Appeal and Review

These processes will be outlined in the *Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure*.



Non-Academic Complaints

Students' non-academic complaints and appeals relate to all aspects of VSC operations other than the delivery of a program. Non-academic complaints and appeals may include but not be limited to the following:

- Enrolment processes or admissions
- Access to facilities or the conditions of the facilities
- Access to resources
- Allegations of discrimination, bullying or harassment
- Safety issues
- Confidentiality or privacy issues
- Issues that may arise from other parties acting on behalf of VSC
- Tuition and other fees and refunds

The process for non-academic complaints is the same as that for Academic complaints:

- Informal Complaint
- Formal Complaint
- Investigation of Formal Complaint
- Initial Outcome of Formal Complaint
- Internal Appeal Official Outcome
- Outcome of Internal Appeal and Review
- External Appeal and Review

As with Academic Complaints the process for the above will be detailed in the *Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure*

Related policy instruments

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Policy

Acceptable Use of Resources Policy Academic Integrity Policy

Assessment and Moderation Policy

Bullying Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy

Equity and Diversity Policy

Facilities Resources and Infrastructure Policy

Health and Safety Policy (Staff and Students)

Student Orientation Policy

Student Orientation Procedure Student



Wellbeing and Support Policy

Student Wellbeing and Support and Procedure

Enrolment Policy

Feedback Policy and Procedure

Conflict of Interest Policy

Admissions Policy

Admissions Procedure

Student Refund Policy

Student Refund Procedure

Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure

Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure Privacy Policy

Related documents and legislation

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards)

2021The Australian Education Act 2013

The Australian Education Regulation 2013 Department

of Education Complete Privacy Policy 2014

Administration

Revision History

Version	Approval date	Approval body	Review date
0.1	15/04/2019	Board of Directors	
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